

VILLAGE EARTH—THE MISSING LINK FOR SUSTAINABLE VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

By

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1. Since the Marshall Plan was so successful in rebuilding Europe, the World Bank and USAID—together with hundreds of well-meaning NGOs—have poured trillions of dollars (\$2.3 trillion) into the Third World nations to try to reduce poverty. But poverty has only increased instead of decreasing.
2. The money from the World Bank and USAID has lined the pockets of the 20% of the people in power in these countries, and it has increased the GNP of each country, but it has not helped the 80% of the people who live in poverty in rural areas in each of these countries.
3. Most of the contributions of the well-meaning NGOs have been single-sector gifts (such as agricultural animals, equipment or medical and other supplies) or financial contributions that help a village temporarily, but does not bring the village out of poverty on a self-reliant, self-sustaining basis.
4. To help a village out of poverty, its enlightened leaders and conscientious members must learn to draw on outside expertise to help the villagers to fulfill the community's goals. This help must be multi-sector and the people must do it themselves. Only then will it be TRULY SUSTAINABLE on into the future.
5. The sectors, which must be developed by the villagers themselves, include: health, education, agriculture, business enterprise, communications, water supply, public works, environment and sanitation, social welfare, safety and security.
6. The villagers have the intelligence and ability to bring themselves out of poverty with the help and guidance of an External Activator working in the village and primarily just asking questions—which guide the villagers in:
 - a. Deciding what things they would like to see in their village in the future that is different,
 - b. Recognizing what the barriers are that are standing in the way,
 - c. Finding out how to overcome these barriers, and
 - d. Carrying out solutions that achieve their goals on a permanent basis—on into the future. This takes five to ten years.
7. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals to eliminate poverty, hunger and disease have documented the terrible situation that exists today, and it makes an excellent appeal for funds. Unfortunately, however, these goals do not describe and document the steps that are necessary to truly eliminate these problems. It appears that the UN expects the methods of the past will be used again—which, of course, will not eliminate poverty any more than it has done in the past.
8. The Village Earth Model www.villageearth.org provides the missing link to this problem by training the villagers to permanently and sustainably solve their own problems of poverty, hunger and disease. It also provides a ready access to the resources that are necessary to accomplish the desired results. Agenda 21, from the UN Conference in Rio de Janeiro, states that the primary problem is the lack of access to resources: information resources, natural resources, financial

- resources, etc. A Service Center, as envisioned in the Village Earth model, is created from outside funding and support, and it provides access to these resources at a relatively low cost.
9. Funds from the traditional funding sources are still needed—they just need to be directed and spent in a different way. They need to provide information and financial support for a truly sustainable development program in which the villagers bring themselves out of poverty by their own planning and their own efforts. The Village Earth Model describes how this can be accomplished—at a surprisingly low cost.
 10. A well-trained External Activator first gets well acquainted with a village just observing and just asking questions (Miles Horton won a national award in 1960 for doing this so successfully in the mountain communities of Kentucky and Tennessee). Next, the External Activator (just by asking questions) guides the villagers in dreaming about: what they would like to have in the future, what are the barriers that stand in the way and then finding ways to overcome these barriers. Once the villagers have accomplished this (which takes months of discussion and visioning), they are ready to go to the Service Center where they have access to resources—information, financial and technical resources.
 11. Through answering the questions of the External Activator, the villagers realize that they have the ability and power to solve their own problems and bring themselves out of poverty—on a truly sustainable basis, on into the future.
 12. The well-meaning NGOs can play a major and very important role in helping to permanently eliminate poverty by working as teams where each NGO contributes its area of expertise (working through the Service Center) at the time each village is ready and prepared to use that help. This process takes 5 to 10 years.

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